

Excerpt: Overview of climate intersections

Climate intersection 1: Just and Democratic Societies

The restructuring of the global economy towards lower carbon dioxide emissions has begun. Many of the associated changes can, in the short term, lead to higher costs for consumers. These costs affect poor and disadvantaged groups the most, as they spend a higher proportion of their income on emission-intensive goods such as food and energy. Existing or new inequalities can present a fertile ground for social polarisation and populism. To counter this, foundations and individual donors can support democratic processes and an open exchange between social groups about what is needed to secure a just and sustainable future.

Climate intersection 2: Public health

The physical and mental health of every human being depends on the rapid mitigation of climate change. Air pollution is already the biggest environmental risk: every year, millions of people die prematurely from its effects, and in 83 per cent of the world's cities air pollution exceeds WHO limits. Heatwaves present a serious health hazard, causing droughts and a deterioration in water quality, and jeopardising food security across the world. New patterns in rainfall, extreme weather events and rising global temperature have caused infectious diseases to spread more quickly.

Climate intersection 3: Disadvantaged groups

Climate change affects everyone – but not everyone is equally capable to react to it. Children have limited capacity to deal with the hardship resulting from crop failure, forced migration or illness. Women are also particularly hard hit by the effects of climate change, which make care and housework – and providing family members with food, fuel and water – much more difficult. It systematically weakens the ability of women, children and other structurally disadvantaged groups in society to help themselves and increases their dependence on others.

Climate intersection 4: Education

Climate education is essential if humanity is to survive in a dramatically hotter and more unstable world. It empowers people of all ages to understand the earth system across disciplines, to acquire professional qualifications that are needed in a CO₂-neutral economy and to adapt their own values and identities to a changing planet. Change will be possible only if climate-relevant content is taught not only in schools but also in other places of learning, such as religious organisations, citizens' groups, workers' associations, the private sector and other educational institutions. There must also be an improvement in the quality of education in general, and in access to it, if the climate resilience of disadvantaged groups is to be strengthened.

Climate intersection 5: Nature conservation

Undamaged ecosystems benefit people: clean air, clean water, nutritious food. Environmental protection is also a cost-effective means of fighting against climate change, as wetlands and other ecosystems store large amounts of CO₂. But only 2 per cent of the worldwide funding that is made available to combat climate change is spent on nature conservation – a huge gap, and one that provides an excellent opportunity for donors looking to create an impact with their resources.